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Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2018/227 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys. It provides a summary of the recent activities undertaken by the Working Group, including refocusing its work towards cross-cutting issues and the mapping of global Sustainable Development Goal indicators that can be derived from household surveys. The Statistical Commission is invited to take note of the progress made and of the future direction of the work.

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Report of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys

I. Introduction

1. In 2015, the Statistical Commission, in its decision 46/105, endorsed the establishment of an intersecretariat working group on household surveys,[1] under the aegis of the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, to foster the coordination and harmonization of household survey activities. The Commission also requested the development of the terms of reference of the Working Group under the guidance of the Bureau of the Commission, to be presented to the Commission at its forty-seventh session. The current members of the Working Group are listed in the annex to the present report.

2. The progress made by the Working Group was set out in the report of the Secretary-General and the report of the Working Group on the subject that were submitted to the Commission at its forty-eighth and forty-ninth sessions (E/CN.3/2017/20 and E/CN.3/2018/7, respectively). Subsequently, in its decision 49/106, the Commission agreed that the work to map Sustainable Development Goal indicators that could be derived from household surveys should continue and encouraged the Working Group to provide guidance on methodological areas and update the existing methodological guidance on household surveys with a cross-cutting focus, in particular on sampling, disaggregation and multimode data collection.

3. The present report provides information on progress made by the Working Group since the previous session of the Commission. The Working Group has discussed how to work more on cross-cutting issues and established new task forces. It has also advanced the work on the mapping of global Goal indicators that can be derived from household surveys, including for data disaggregation. A paper presenting key findings, as well as advantages and challenges with regard to using household surveys, will be before the Commission as a background document, together with the updated mapping exercise.

II. Progress of work

4. The fourth and fifth meetings of the management group of the Working Group were held on 7 March 2018 in New York and 5 November 2018 in Stockholm, respectively. The participants discussed two main topics: the future direction of work and strengthening the secretariat of the Working Group with a full-time position.

5. The technical working group held its fourth meeting, in Vienna on 27 and 28 September 2018. The participants discussed how to move the work towards more cross-cutting issues, advocacy for the work and funding to strengthen the secretariat of the Working Group and methodological developments. The Working Group also organized a panel discussion at the second United Nations World Data Forum, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in October 2018, entitled "Innovate or perish! Household surveys in a changing landscape data land". The panel presented innovative developments relating to household survey design and implementation, with integration as the central theme. The session was well attended and positive feedback was received.

[1] Further information is available at the website of the Working Group (https://unstats.un.org/iswghs).

6. At the forty-ninth session of the Commission, the Working Group presented a mapping exercise showing the entire range of global Goal indicators for which data could be derived from household surveys. The goal was to develop a shared vision of how household survey-based data for Goal indicators could be efficiently delivered by countries and, in parallel, to identify activities required of the member agencies to support countries in this task. A total of 77 indicators, distributed widely across the Goals, were identified as being sourced (either currently or potentially) from household surveys. As recommended by the Commission, work in this regard has continued. First, an additional consideration has been added to the mapping to show possible ways of disaggregating data derived from household surveys in order to fulfil the ambition, set out in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, of leaving no one behind. Second, a paper currently under development will provide an outline of the key findings of the mapping exercise, with emphasis laid on the importance of household surveys for Goal monitoring, including at the subnational level. Also included will be key methodological and technical innovations for household surveys, as well as challenges faced. Both documents will be before the Commission as background documents.

7. In 2017, five task forces were established within the Working Group. Progress has been made in their work.[2] While work remains to be done on some of the topics that the task forces covered, it was decided that the Working Group's activities should move away from sectoral issues and focus on more cross-cutting activities, in the light of the request by the Commission, including with regard to addressing the needs for data disaggregation. More information about this work will be posted on the web page of the Working Group.

8. Regarding updating the manual entitled *Designing Household Survey Samples: Practical Guidelines*, the Working Group has decided to complement existing guidelines with new areas on sampling rather than updating the entire manual. The content of the guidelines remains relevant. Updates may include sample frame issues, sampling strategies to leave no one behind and new technologies used for sampling, taking into account specific country and regional contexts.

9. The Working Group has in the past year been working to secure funds to strengthen technical coordination, methodological validation and standard-setting, and country consultation and advocacy. Its member agencies have agreed to contribute funds to allow the recruitment of a full-time coordinator. Once that person has been hired, the Working Group will look to raise funds to advance other elements of its work.

10. The Working Group discussed the possibility of organizing an international conference on household surveys. To limit travel expenses and save resources, it was agreed to organize a full-day event in conjunction with other major events at which statisticians and their partners meet.

11. The Working Group's member agencies will continue to support countries in conducting household surveys.

III. Conclusion

12. **The Commission is invited to take note of the progress made and of the future direction of the work.**

[2] A summary of the work can be found on the Group's webpage at https://unstats.un.org/ISWGHS.

Annex

Membership of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

International Labour Organization

Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat

United Nations Children's Fund

United Nations Development Programme

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Institute for Statistics

United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

World Bank

World Health Organization

The Statistics Division serves as the secretariat of the Working Group.